Remarks

Claims 5, 13, 14, and 25 are pending in the application. All claims have been rejected.

Claim Objection

Initially, claim 5 was objected to because the word "extended" was incorrectly used. Applicants have followed the examiner's suggestion and deleted that word from the claim. A similar amendment has been made to claim 25.

Rejections

35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 5 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by *Blasé* (U.S. Patent 6,354,070). The examiner has stated that *Blasé*, at col. 1, lines 5 to 11, col. 4, lines 45 *et seq.*, and Figs. 2 and 2A, discloses all of the elements recited in claims 5 and 25.

Generally, *Blasé* fails to disclose an unloaded condition that is pretensioned into an arc-shape and then extends when the line guidance unit is in a loaded condition. There is no means in *Blasé* for pretensioning the line guidance unit. In the Action at page 3, there is no specific citation to common contact surfaces that cause this pretensioned arc-shape, and Applicants are unable to find such a disclosure in any of the citations to *Blasé* listed by the examiner.

It is true that the *Blasé* cable guide can bend, but that is different from the claimed line guidance unit because the common contact surfaces of *Blasé* are not disposed to cause bending in an unloaded condition. The arc-shaped projections 18 in *Blasé* are intended to prevent "twisting of the sliding strip 2." (Col. 4, lines 64 to 65.) Thus, the elements of *Blasé* are all intended to limit movement and do not pretension or cause movement into an arc-shape when the guide is in an unloaded condition.

Further regarding *Blasé*, the protruding section 21 is brought into contact with web 22 bridging slot 17 to *limit* the maximum pivoting angle of adjacent guide links. (Col. 5, lines 3 to

8.) This is not a disclosure of a pretensioner that causes the guide to be arc-shaped in an unloaded condition.

This conclusion is further supported by *Blasé*'s description of his invention:

"The guide links can be designed such that they limit the movement of the guided cables in three directions perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the sliding strip, i.e. transverse to the sliding strip and away from the sliding strip, where the movement of the guided cables in the fourth direction is limited by the sliding strip."

Again, limiting movement in three or four directions is not a disclosure of causing movement of the guide to an arc-shape when the guide is in an unloaded condition.

In the present application, independent claim 25 as amended states that the line guidance unit comprises:

"a common contact surface on each segment overlap region," wherein

"each common contact surface engages the common contact surface on an adjacent segment to dispose the line guidance unit in an arc-shape when the line guidance unit is in the unloaded condition and for resisting loads when the line guidance unit is in the loaded condition."

One relevant portion of this application regarding these conditions can be found on page 4, first paragraph, where it states that the line guidance unit adjusts between an extended state to an arc-shape relative to a straight line connecting the two ends. This adjustment of the claimed line guidance unit results from overlap regions 6, 6′ and is alternatively or additionally realized by protrusions 33 (page 10, last two paragraphs and page 11, first paragraph and recited in claim 5) that provide a pretensioning of the line guidance unit so that an arc is formed before the line

guidance unit is loaded with lines, cables or similar components that can be introduced into the line guidance unit.

In general, the loading of the line guidance unit by lines, cables or similar components tends to cause sagging of the line guidance unit, which is the condition depicted in the upper part of the guide unit illustrated in Fig. 2A of *Blasé*. The sagging effect of the upper portion of the *Blasé* guide is shown in Fig. 2A as bending in the opposite direction of the intended bending radius. A pretensioned line guidance unit as claimed in the present application is bent in only one direction. Being loaded with lines, cables or similar components, the line guidance unit in an extended state would not show a sagging effect, but would still form an arc (in the unloaded state) or a straight line (in the loaded state).

The same distinction applies to *Fukao*. *Fukao* shows only contact surfaces that resist bending in one direction, but do not show any elements that provide a pretension so that a sagging in the loaded state of the line guidance unit is being prevented.

Thus, claims 5 and 25 are not anticipated by the cited patents.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 13 and 14 were rejected as being obvious over *Blasé*. For the reasons stated above with respect to claim 25, the inventions recited in claims 13 and 14 would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

With regard to the shapes of the support and link sections, the examiner asserts that there is no advantage stated for the trapezoidal shaped support members, and that the guide links of *Blasé* can be of different heights to accommodate cables. Applicants respectfully note that the specification and drawings of the present invention disclose to one of ordinary skill in the art that the trapezoidal and rhomboidal shapes provide articulation and curvature to the line guidance

unit. There is no teaching of such a feature in *Blasé*. Thus, claims 13 and 14 would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

With respect to the examiner's citation to the varying height of the guide links in *Blasé*, Applicants respectfully submit that *Blasé*, col. 1, lines 45 to 50 is not a teaching that trapezoidal (claim 13) or rhomboidal (claim 14) shapes can be used to pretension a line guidance unit. This feature is shown in the present application in Fig. 12 and is described at page 12, first paragraph of the present application. Fig. 12 illustrates the line guidance unit in an arc-shape. Further, at page 6, in the first partial paragraph, it states:

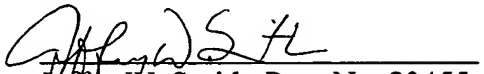
> By having a trapezoidal and/or rhomboidal design of the link sections, the elastic properties of the support strip are influenced. Especially in this way tilting movements around an axis lengthwise to the support strip can be allowed.

Further, taken in conjunction with the descriptions of the pretensioning features of the present invention, one skilled in the art would know that the trapezoidal and rhomboidal shapes are used to pretension the line guidance unit. Thus, claims 13 and 14 would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the claims are allowable, and Applicants respectfully request that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,



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